

NIH Asbestos Management Program

The NIH Asbestos Program is comprehensive and multifaceted. It consists of:

- Training and hazard communication;
- Abatement along with abatement oversight;
- Exposure monitoring and sampling;
- Respiratory protection, and
- Medical surveillance.

It can be reasonably assumed that buildings constructed prior to 1980 contain some asbestos containing material (ACM). The NIH has worked to identify the location of ACM in our facilities and maintains a list of these materials. To prevent the accidental disturbance by employees, contractors or visitors, all of these buildings have been posted with asbestos notices, and asbestos containing materials in areas with potential for damage are labeled. Employees who work in areas where they could potentially come in direct contact with or damage these materials are given appropriate asbestos training.

The NIH is currently planning abatement projects in 24 of the 36 buildings constructed with asbestos containing materials. These projects will involve the removal of friable ACM in the mechanical rooms and accessible friable ACM in public spaces. Friability is the ability of materials, when dry, to be crumbled, pulverized, or reduced to powder by hand pressure. Un-damaged friable asbestos will not release asbestos fibers into the air. If it is left alone or in place, it is not hazardous to employees. However, in order to provide an additional degree of assurance, the NIH has decided that it will remove friable ACM from mechanical rooms and accessible locations in public spaces even if the asbestos is not presently damaged. The buildings are 1, 7, 9, 10, 12, 12A, 12B, 13, 14A, 14D, 14H, 15B, 15C, 15D, 15E, 15G, 15H, 15I, 16, 18, 18T, 21, 29, 29A, 31A, 31B, 31C, 38, T8 and 103. ACM in these and other buildings that is non-friable, in good condition and/or located in areas not likely to be disturbed by employees will remain in place until these areas are renovated or demolished. Upon renovation, these materials will be replaced with non-asbestos materials. This practice is in compliance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations and guidelines.

The NIH performs a thorough review of each asbestos abatement project prior to approval; provides independent oversight of all work, from the planning phase to completion; and maintains records of abatement work performed in our facilities. All abatement work is contained using air-tight barriers and negative pressure to prevent the release of asbestos fibers to adjacent areas, and workers use special practices such as wetting down ACM with water before disturbing the material. The abatement contractor is required to perform air sampling during all phases of the project. In addition, the NIH conducts its own independent air sampling to ensure employees or visitors are not exposed to asbestos fibers.

If an employee sees any material that they believe may be an asbestos containing material, and it appears to be damaged, they should notify their supervisor and the Division of Occupational Health and Safety (DOHS) immediately (301-496-2960). If the employee is concerned about potential exposure, they should also visit the OMS clinic in Building 10, Room 6C306. For more information about the types of materials that potentially contain asbestos or NIH's Asbestos Program, please visit the DOHS website http://dohs.ors.od.nih.gov/workplace_asbestos.htm. In addition, you can contact the DOHS if you have any questions or concerns at 301-496-2960.